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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000703

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR G. GARLAND
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2018

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SUBJECT: STALEMATE

REF: PRETORIA 1847

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Elton Mangoma, an MDC negotiator and advisor to MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai, told polecon chief August 19 that despite pressure from all sides the MDC would sign a deal only if Tsvangirai became head of government. While negotiations will continue, facilitated by South African president Thabo Mbeki under the aegis of the SADC Troika, Mangoma said the MDC would hold firm and would be prepared to wait out ZANU-PF until an agreement reflective of the March 29 elections was achieved. With ZANU-PF unwilling to cede power, he saw no prospect for an early resolution to the Zimbabwean crisis. END SUMMARY.

The MDC Holds Firm

12. (C) Mangoma said at the SADC Summit (Ref) there had been intense pressure from all sides to reach an agreement. Apart from ZANU-PF, the MDC Mutambara (MDC-M) negotiators, particularly Welshman Ncube, had been aggressive--even more so than ZANU-PF--during the tripartite negotiations in pressuring Tsvangirai to sign an agreement. Ncube had argued that without a deal the MDC would have nothing. Mangoma opined to us that the MDC would be finished in a government controlled by ZANU-PF and that in urging Tsvangirai to sign an agreement, Ncube and MDC-M were angling for positions in a new government controlled by ZANU-PF.

13. (C) SADC and Mbeki had pleaded with MDC Tsvangirai (MDC-T) at the SADC Summit last week to sign an agreement which left Mugabe with executive power and control of the security forces, according to Mangoma. They had tried to convince the MDC that whatever reservations it had about a power-sharing agreement could be worked out in the new

government. Mangoma believed that SADC and Mbeki were not concerned about the nature of an agreement, but just wanted one signed. Pressure was being placed primarily on the MDC because Tsvangirai was considered more malleable than Mugabe.

¶4. (C) Despite the pressure, Mangoma insisted--as has Tsvangirai--that the MDC would not sign a bad agreement. It was prepared to be patient and wait, as the shrinking economy denied more and more ZANU-PF officials access to government largesse, until ZANU-PF was willing to concede the role of head of government to Tsvangirai.

¶5. (C) While Mangoma saw no early end to the impasse, he said the MDC would continue to talk when summoned by the mediator, Mbeki. It would also continue its outreach within the SADC region to attempt to create more pressure on Mugabe.

Mbeki and SADC

¶6. (C) Mangoma said Mbeki would continue in his role as mediator, supported by the SADC Troika (the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security Co-operation), now comprised of Mozambique (replacing Tanzania), Angola, and Swaziland as chair. He expressed some suspicion of the Troika--King Mswati of Swaziland "didn't know what an election was," and Angola was a one-party state with some difficulty relating to a two-party democracy. Nevertheless, he thought Angola had a

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growing and sophisticated understanding of Zimbabwe and Mozambique had a history of dealing with opposition politics.

¶7. (C) Mangoma added that he believed SADC was sensitive to the concerns of the international community and urged us to continue to work behind the scenes to encourage SADC countries to support a fair agreement. He noted that Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana had shown strong support for the MDC's position and, based on discussions at the SADC Summit, thought Malawi might be supportive as well.

¶8. (C) Mangoma said Tsvangirai planned to travel to Botswana and Zambia within the next couple of days and might also visit King Mswati in Swaziland. He would then return to Harare before traveling to other SADC countries to enlist support.

Parliament and the MDC

¶9. (C) There have been news that Mugabe would soon convene Parliament, perhaps on September 1. Mangoma was uncertain if this was true, but said the MDC would oppose it as a violation of the Memorandum of Understanding that serves as a basis for the negotiations. Nevertheless, if Parliament was convened, Mangoma was confident that with a couple of exceptions, all MDC-T parliamentarians would be present. According to Mangoma, with the expected support of six to eight of the MDC-M MPs, MDC-T would have a parliamentary majority and would be able to elect the Speaker of the House of Assembly.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Tsvangirai and MDC-T face continuing and increasing pressure from ZANU-PF, MDC-M, and SADC to sign a power-sharing deal that would leave Mugabe with considerable executive power. They continue to take a principled position--in the face of spin by ZANU-PF that they are defying SADC--and insist on an agreement that makes

Tsvangirai head of government. (The GOZ mouthpiece The Herald carried two headlines today: "MDC-T leader lie to us (SADC) about Zim situation," and "'SADC presses Tsvangirai to sign deal".) We should continue to make our position clear to SADC capitals: international reengagement will be considered only if a government is constituted, consistent with the March 29 elections, that has Tsvangirai as its head.
MCGEE